

The Tale of Brave Yatto and His Sister Teune



The scene of this fairy-tale is set in the Far North. The land where the Sun travels across the sky in a sleigh drawn by the Deer with the Golden Antlers, and where Blizzard, the wicked witch, rules the Night. The people inhabiting these cold regions have their own tales and legends in which brave and resourceful heroes come to grips with and triumph over the evil forces of Nature.

Janna Vitenzon, a children's writer, has based her story of Brave Yatto and his sister Teune on the folk tales of the NENTSY, one of the nationalities living in the Far North of the Russian Federation.



Long, long ago on the shores of the Arctic Sea stood an old deerskin tent, the yaranga. In it lived a poor woman with her son Yatto and daughter Teune. The mother did all the work herself. She went hunting, fetched water and firewood.



One day she fell ill and asked her son to go and fetch the firewood. But Yatto snuggled down under his deerskin blanket and pretended he hadn't heard.



“Daughter, go and fetch some firewood. If the fire goes out, Blizzard may come.” “I’m busy,” replied Teune and started adorning her long plaits with beads.



Blizzard was very close.... A spark fell on her snowy robe and made a big hole in it. The wicked Blizzard was afraid of fire.



But when the fire went out, Blizzard rushed in to the yaranga and banged with her magic staff. Mother lifted her arms and ... they had turned into wings.



She flew up – a white seagull. Blizzard waved her staff at the children but Mother protected them with her white wings.



Blizzard whisked the seagull away. Yatto and Teune rushed after her, but she was gone. "It's all your fault," cried Teune. "No, it's yours," said Yatto.



There was no point in quarrelling.
They sat by the cold hearth all night,
but in the morning Yatto took his
bow and arrows and said: "Let's go
and find Mother, Teune."



Blizzard took the seagull to her ice yaranga, banged with her staff and the bird turned back into a woman. Blizzard ordered her to make her a new robe in place of the old scorched one.



Mother's hands were stiff with cold from the ice cloth and ice needle. Her thoughts flew to her home and children. How were they? But Yatto and Teune were a long way from home now.



Kind old Sun showed them the way.
"Blizzard lives in the ice mountains," he told them. "The way there is difficult and dangerous. Take my arrows, they will help you in trouble."



Two shining arrows fell at Yatto's feet. He wrapped them in a deerskin and put them in his jacket. Sun drove away and polar night descended on the tundra.



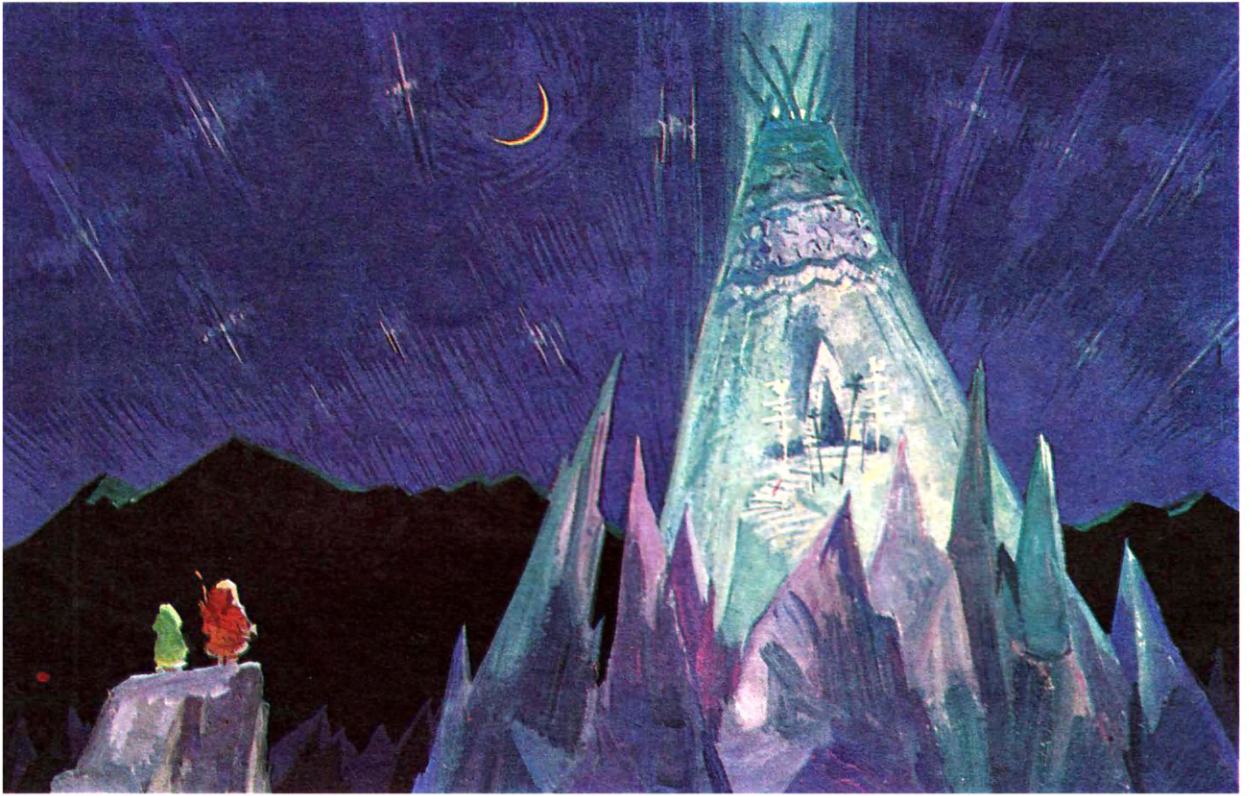
Baby Deer rushed out of the darkness pursued by Wolf. Yatto seized an arrow and fired it at Wolf. Then Baby Deer set off with the children, for he had lost his mummy too.



Blizzard sent Lazy-Doze to put the children to sleep. But Teune coaxed away his magic horn, played a tune and sent him to sleep forever.



On went the three until they saw
Mother Deer leaping towards them.
She'd found her son at last! So she
put his rescuers on her back and
streaked off faster than the wind ...



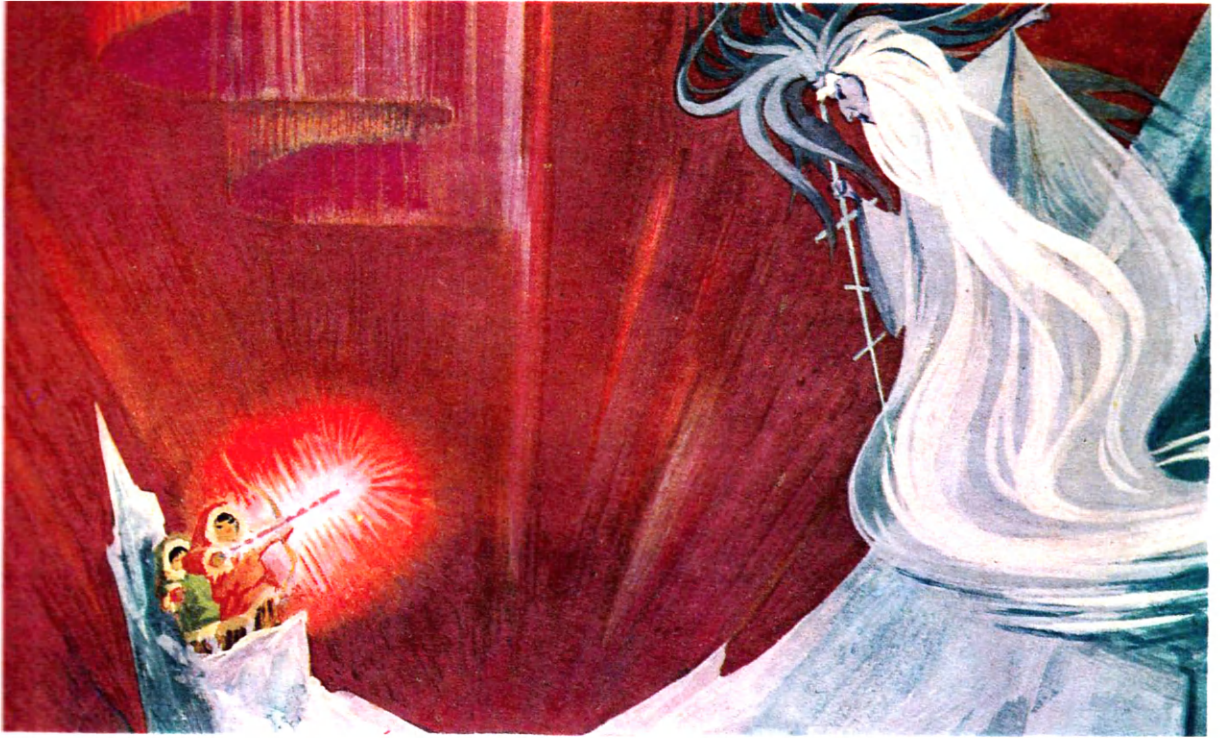
... right up to the ice mountains. Yatto and Teune climbed to the top where Blizzard's yaranga stood. There, behind the thick ice walls, was Mother. But in front of them lay an abyss.



Teune cut off her plaits, the fairest ones in the whole tundra, and wove them into a rope. Yatto made a knot and threw the rope over the abyss.



Suddenly impenetrable Darkness, sent by Blizzard, enveloped everything. Yatto shot Sun's golden arrow into the sky and the knights, the Sun's brothers called the Northern Lights, appeared. Darkness retreated.



Yatto and Teune walked across the rope. “Advance at your peril!” cried Blizzard. But Yatto shot the second golden arrow at her and she melted away.



Mother ran out to greet them. "You've become a real hunter, my son," she said. "But where are your plaits, Teune?" "Never mind, Mother, they'll soon grow again," Teune smiled.

Drawings by L. ARISTOV

Diafilm Studios, 1970

Сказка о храбром Ятто
и его сестре Тэюнэ

На английском языке



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